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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
18 April 1975

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Indochina
(As of 1600 EDST)
No. 16

VIETNAM

East of Saigon

1. South Vietnamese forces on the Xuan Loc battlefront are still crumbling as the result of sustained communist attacks. At least one of the communist attacking divisions --the 6th--has pulled away from the battlefront and is now swinging to the south, either headed for Vung Tau or around the government's southern flank and on towards Saigon.

2. A large gap in the defensive perimeter of Bien Hoa was filled on April 18 when a brigade of Marines was moved into blocking positions to the north of Bien Hoa. Despite airstrikes against North Vietnamese artillery positions used for firing at Bien Hoa, the airbase has been hit again with large-caliber artillery and rockets.

South and West of Saigon

3. The communists are bringing the fight closer to Saigon. On April 17-18, a flurry of communist attacks in Long An Province spread to the outskirts of the capital. A number of smaller positions were overrun and many others hit hard with shellings and ground attacks.

4. Meanwhile, both sides are reinforcing southwest of Saigon. The communists have moved two regiments of their 8th Division into Long An Province and at least two regiments of the North Vietnamese 9th Division

State Department review completed

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are now believed to be in southern Hau Nghia Province. The South Vietnamese have now committed most of their 7th Division to the Route 4 area on both sides of Tan An. Two partially regrouped regiments of the broken 22nd Division have also been dispatched to Long An Province. These units together with the territorial forces are, nevertheless, no match for the communist forces--in excess of three divisions--now converging on Saigon from the southwest.

Communist Units Mass Northeast of Saigon

5. The Communists soon will have 17 full divisions to commit against remaining government positions defending Saigon and the delta, and will outnumber the government forces by about two-to-one. The South Vietnamese have only seven divisions; three others are in the process of rebuilding. Moreover, Communist artillery attacks are threatening to close down government airbases close to the capital. Without this air support, the South Vietnamese will be greatly outgunned as well as out-manned.

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Little Hope

10. General Nguyen Van Toan, the commander of the provinces ringing Saigon, bluntly told the Joint General Staff in a briefing on April 18, that the communists were now in a position to put military pressure on his forces which could not possibly be contained. Toan stated that his reserves, including parts of the Airborne Division, have taken heavy casualties, are exhausted, and cannot fight much longer. The entire staff, including its chief, General Vien, accepted Toan's briefing and its conclusions without offering any comments or suggestions.

CAMBODIA

11. So far there is no information to confirm or deny the rumor picked up by the Associated Press office in Bangkok that the Khmer Communists have executed 21 foreign journalists in Phnom Penh. Radio Phnom Penh remains off the air and the French representative in the capital is now apparently maintaining the only contact with the outside. The French ambassador in Bangkok told Ambassador Dean that there had been some "turmoil" in the city this morning and vaguely sourced new accounts allege that many civilians fled Phnom Penh following Communist claims of impending US bombings. These reports suggest that the Communists are carrying out their plans to evacuate a large part of Phnom Penh's population to the countryside.

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12. On the diplomatic front, the ASEAN nations and Portugal today announced their recognition of Sihanouk's "government." Japan announced that it would establish ties as soon as possible but Prince Sihanouk told a Japanese newsmen in Peking that any such attempt would be rebuffed because of Tokyo's support for the former Lon Nol government. Cambodian embassy officials in Kuala Lumpur and Tokyo have proclaimed their willingness to serve the new regime in Phnom Penh.

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14. [redacted] Cambodian Army troops have abandoned the town of Samrong--in the north-western province of Oddar Meanchey--and have moved to a village on the Thai border. Officers at Samrong had earlier indicated that they plan to organize a resistance movement but the local population reacted negatively and these plans have presumably been scrapped. Press reports indicate that large numbers of Cambodians have fled into Thailand from the northwestern provincial capital of Pailin.

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